

**CLAIMS**

1. A method of digitally processing images in a network system including digital image processing devices, at least a subset of said devices having an operating unit provided with operating means and a display, the method comprising:

- storing, in each digital image processing device, information on capabilities and status of connected digital image processing devices;
- receiving, at a first device, a command for starting a digital image processing job with job settings;
- automatically analysing said digital image processing job as to device capabilities necessary for processing said job in accordance with the job settings of the job;
- automatically checking if the first device can process the job in accordance with the job settings of the job; and
- automatically advising at the first device, if said first device cannot process the job, of at least one other device that can process the job in accordance with the job settings of the job.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein a criterion used in deciding if a device can process a specific digital image processing job is whether that device has the capabilities necessary for processing the job.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the advice is given if another device having said capabilities needed for processing said job is available.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein, if more than one other device can process the job, the advice indicates one other device on the basis of the walking distance from the first device.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein, if more than one other device can process the job, the advice indicates one other device on the basis of degree of occupation.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein said advising has the form of a

message on the display of said first device.

7. A method of processing digital print files in a network system including a plurality of printers, at least a subset of the printers having an operating unit provided with operating means and a display, the method comprising:

- storing, in each printer, information on capabilities and status of connected printers;
- receiving, at a first printer, a print file having preprogrammed settings;
- automatically analysing said print file as to printer capabilities necessary for printing the print file in accordance with the preprogrammed settings of the print file;
- automatically checking if said first printer can print the print file in accordance with said preprogrammed settings; and
- automatically advising at the first printer, if said first printer cannot print the print file, of at least one other printer that can print said print file in accordance with said preprogrammed settings.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein each print file is stored upon reception and not printed until an operator, using the operating means of the operating unit of the printer, selects said print file and starts a print process for said print file, and wherein the advice is given in reaction to selection of the print file.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein a print file comprises metadata specifying job information and print image data, and

wherein at least the metadata of each print file are shared among at least a subset of the printers connected to the system, so that a print file may be selected and started at any of the printers of said subset, regardless of presence of the associated print image data in that printer.

10. The method of processing digital scan jobs in a network system including a plurality of scanners, said scanners having an operating unit provided with operating means and a display, the method comprising:

- storing, in each scanner, information on capabilities and status of connected scanners;
- receiving, at a first scanner, a scan job command entered by an operator, including scan job settings;
- automatically analysing said scan job as to scanner capabilities necessary for processing the scan job in accordance with the entered scan job settings;
- automatically checking if said first scanner can process the scan job in accordance with said scan job settings, and
- automatically advising, at the first scanner, if said first scanner cannot process the scan job, of at least one other scanner that can print said print file in accordance with said scan job settings.

11. A printer for printing digital print files, for use in a network printing system including a plurality of printers, said printer comprising:

- a network connection unit for communicating with the system and for receiving print files having preprogrammed settings;
- a print unit;
- an operating unit provided with operating means and a display; and
- a control unit including
  - a maintaining mechanism for maintaining information on capabilities and status of connected printers;
  - an analysing mechanism for analysing a received print file as to printer capabilities necessary for printing the print file in accordance with the preprogrammed settings of the print file;
  - a checking mechanism for checking if the printer can print the print file in accordance with said preprogrammed settings; and
  - an advising mechanism for advising, in the case that the printer cannot print the print file, of at least one other printer that has the capabilities needed for printing said print file in accordance with said preprogrammed settings.

12. The printer according to claim 11, wherein said control unit decides if a

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printer can print a specific print file on the basis of whether that printer has the capabilities necessary for printing the print file.

13. The printer according to claim 11, wherein said control unit gives the advice if another printer having said capabilities needed for printing said print file is available.

14. The printer according to claim 11, wherein the information on capabilities and status of connected printers, maintained in each printer, includes the physical locations of said printers, and

wherein, if more than one other printer can print the print file, the control unit advises one other printer on the basis of the walking distance from the first printer.

15. The printer according to claim 11, wherein, if more than one other printer can print the print file, the control unit advises one other printer on the basis of degree of occupation.

16. The printer according to claim 11, wherein a digital print file includes metadata specifying job information and print image data, the printer further comprising:

- an extracting module for extracting at least part of the metadata of a received print file and storing the same in a local memory dedicated to the control unit;

- a storing module for storing the print image data of said received print file in a logical storage space allocated to said user;

wherein said control unit further includes:

-- a print file selection mechanism for presenting print files, based on the metadata extracted by the extracting module, that can be selected via the operating means; and

-- a print file releasing mechanism for releasing a print file for printing by the print unit only after selection of that print file and an associated print command entered via the operating means;

wherein the control unit operates said advising mechanism upon selection of a print file, if the printer cannot print the print file in accordance with its preprogrammed settings.

17. The printer according to claim 14, further including

- a metadata exchange module for exchanging metadata of print files directly or indirectly with another printer,

wherein said control unit is operable to receive metadata from said metadata exchange module.

18. A scanner for processing digital scan jobs, for use in a network system including a plurality of scanners, said scanner comprising:

- a network connection unit, for communicating with the network system;
- a scan unit;
- an operating unit provided with operating means and a display for entering a scan job command with scan job settings;
- a control unit including
  - a maintaining mechanism for maintaining information on capabilities and status of connected scanners;
  - an analysing mechanism for analysing an entered scan job command as to scanner capabilities necessary for processing the scan job in accordance with the scan job settings of the scan job;
  - a checking mechanism for checking if the scanner can process the scan job in accordance with said scan job settings; and
  - an advising mechanism for advising, in the case that the scanner cannot process the scan job, of at least one other scanner that has the capabilities needed for processing said scan job in accordance with said scan job settings.

19. The scanner according to claim 18, wherein said control unit decides if a scanner can process a specific scan job on the basis of whether that scanner has the capabilities necessary for processing the scan job.

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20. The printer according to claim 18, wherein said control unit gives the advice if another scanner having said capabilities needed for processing said scan job is available.

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